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THE WORLD OF LJE

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THE WORLD OF LJE

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Scrapbooks . . . or books of scraps. Making and keeping them is a pleasant way to while away some time . . . a way to keep records about one's progress through life or issues of the day.

So, it is also a pleasant task to study a collection of scrapbooks centering on the life of one family, now deceased, whose activities covered the period from 1894 to 1987. The World Wars, the very early development of modern business methods, the depression, politics, the nuclear age but also family life and social activities were all of interest to Lewellyn James Egelston, Bertha Philbrick Egelston and their children, Vera V., Mildred, and Lewellyn, Jr., or "Tas."

Sixteen scrapbooks kept by the family were given to the Rutland Historical Society in August 1985 by Vera Egelston. These, along with many family photographs already in the society's collection, provide a fine opportunity to reconstruct the life and times of a very busy man, engrossed in business, politics, community activities and a close family relationship.

The scrapbooks were probably compiled by his wife at her husband's behest. Because of their arrangement, it seems likely that items of interest were clipped or collected and eventually pasted in an album according to subject matter, not always dated but dateable in context. News articles about election results, state and local legislative activities, the 1930 census, business ads and news, Masonic meetings, the effects of the Depression, probate court, the Republican Party were all of prime interest. Family news, such as weddings, births, graduations, obituaries, DAR events, plus poetry, historical tidbits and town histories, all kept the chronicler busy clipping and pasting the items.

Lewellyn J. Egelston was born on a farm in Franklin, New York, 22 April 1868. His parents were Squire Egelston and Frances Crawford Egelston. His brother was The Reverend V. L. Egelston of Andover, New York, and his sister was Winifred Egelston Ellis of Fairfax, Vermont. L. J. Egelston's mother died suddenly in Rutland, 27 February 1905 at age 64. The sister died the same day, seven hours later from the shock of her mother's death.

After his early schooling and a brief period at an Albany, New York, business school, LJE came to Rutland in September 1894 to teach at the Rutland English and Classical Institute and Business College. By 1901 he was the principal and soon the owner of what had evolved by that time into the Rutland Business College, located at 16 North Main Street. Except for a five-year period, he was the owner until his death in 1943. On 10 September 1890 he married Bertha Olive Philbrick of Shrewsbury, daughter of William W. and Olive (Russell) Philbrick and so began a long relationship with other Shrewsbury families, principally the Russells, the Aldriches and Philbricks. The Egelston's three children were born in the 1890s. At one time the family lived at 2 South Main Street, later known as the Lindholm Block.



Rutland Business College . . . corner of West Street and Merchants Row

LJE served as an alderman from 1915-1919. He was a Rutland County Senator in 1925, '27, and '31. He was appointed probate judge on 22 January 1936 by Governor Charles M. Smith and afterwards, was elected to the post, which he still held at the time of his death. In all the positions to which he was elected, he topped all the other candidates in votes cast.

In 1929 and 1930 he was the supervisor in southern Vermont for compiling the census. In that census Vermont showed the most gain in population in any 10-year period since the Civil War. *The Bennington Banner* editorialized that it had never seen more earnest service displayed in a public work than that of Mr. Egelston in taking the 1930 census.

As the state senator he faced problems that are still on legislative agendas; for example, good roads: they were needed, necessitating higher gas taxes and "What we don't put in them by way of adequate gas taxes is inevitably bound to come out in the form of extra upkeep. A gas tax is better than a 'mud hole' tax. The people who own cars and use our roads should pay for them." He opposed a "millstone-around-the-neck" bond issue to produce a much more extensive system of better road building during the 1925 session. Judging by the number of clippings about them, all having the same classic arguments about financing, roads were the hot topic in 1925.

L. J. Egelston for Probate Judge



It is not at all a question of "WHOSE JOB IT IS," but it **IS** a serious question of **WHO** is best qualified through intensive experience to take care, not only of the daily routine work, but to properly dispose of an accumulation of several hundred cases which are anywhere from 10 to 50 years old. The attention of a business executive who gets things done is very important at the present time. Consider these things and vote for the best welfare of the office. I am standing squarely on my record in asking for your support.

L. J. Egelston for Probate Judge
Election Day November 5, 1940
Polls Open 10 A. M. to 6 P. M.
Cast An Early Ballot

L. J. Egelston



(Left to right) William W. Philbrick holding Mildred; his wife, Olive Russell Philbrick; Vera V.; Frances Crawford Egelston and her husband, Squire Egelston, holding Tas (Lewellyn J. Egelston, Jr.). In back, Lewellyn J. Egleston and wife, Bertha Philbrick Egelston. Picture taken before 27 February 1905 when LJE's mother, Frances Egelston, died.



The Egelston family (left to right) Son, Tas; his wife, Gladys; LJE; his wife, Bertha, and their daughters, Vera and Mildred (circa 1920s).

LJE opposed the Child Labor Amendment to the U.S. Constitution because he did not believe in the centralization of power in Washington, which would mean the creation of another expensive bureau; again a standard argument.

By the time his work as census supervisor was completed, the country was engulfed in the Great Depression. No doubt, due to LJE's organizational skills and dedication, he was appointed to manage the Rutland Employment Office for the U.S. Department of Labor for the years of 1931-1933. The scrapbooks cover many aspects of the situation, reflecting LJE's ability to garner press attention.

Following are samples of topics that can certainly interest many today as they did the Egelstons over the years. All were Published in *The Rutland Herald*. Insofar as possible, for the sake of history, the items selected from the scrapbooks are placed here in chronological order. Just who made the decisions to clip items relating to certain topics we can only guess, but clearly many issues interested the Egelstons, issues which are still hotly debated today.

21 February 1913

STERILIZATION . . . ITS MEANING . . . CORRESPONDENT BELIEVES THE WORD IS NOT UNDERSTOOD.

[This Letter to the Editor from Annette Parmelee of Enosburg Falls is characteristic of a very early argument for the benefit of sterilization which was proposed in a bill before the Legislature.]

21 March ?

SCIENTIST SAYS WAR IS A BIOLOGICALLY "NATURAL PROCESS" . . .

[So stated Dr. Raymond Pearl, world-famous biologist of John Hopkins University. He was advocating birth control as a better remedy than war to "ameliorate the consequence of the biological urge to reproduction."]

18 August 1935

CATHOLICS FACE A CHURCH BAN IF THEY JOIN BIRTH CONTROL GROUPS

Catholics of the St. Paul archdiocese were forbidden today to hold membership or employment in organizations advocating birth control, under penalty of excommunication.

On the same page but no date: **PERSONS WHO WON FAME DESPITE THEIR PHYSICAL HANDICAPS AT BIRTH**

[The list of 11 goes from Alexander the Great to Helen Keller, and lists their disabilities.]

Early February 1921 or 1922

SIX TRACTORS TUG AT 75-TON BOULDER

[There follows a long description of the Herculean effort and equipment being used to move the huge rock from the Dyer farm two miles south of the city to a prepared site in Main Street park, opposite the Koltonski fire station. It is a memorial erected by the DAR in honor of the men who fought in the "Great War."]

11 February 1924

DEPLORES NEGLECT OF GRAVES OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR HEROES . . . So said Louise Bull Billings of Ann Story Chapter DAR [On the same page] . . . AMERICANIZATION IS A VERMONT PROBLEM!

INFLUX OF FRENCH-CANADIANS IN NORTHERN COUNTIES IS MENACE . . . says Lena Ross . . . speaking to Ann Story Chapter DAR [Miss Ross was deputy state probation officer. She defined Americanization as the "right appreciation of living." Some of the native population, she said, need a better assimilation and a more generous responsibility toward the foreign population that comes to us.]

28 March 1924

[Among the items saved in the scrapbooks is a letter to LJE from John C. Coolidge, an agent for Vermont Mutual Fire Insurance Company, replying to him concerning rumors in *The Herald* about the formation of a Coolidge for President Club. He states, "It appears the whole matter without any voice of the people was dictated by Mr. Moore and is not meeting the approval of the public in general. I trust the matter will soon be arranged so all will progress in harmony."

Mr. Moore referred to above was Charles Moore, chairman of the National Commission on Fine Arts and a friend of Mrs. Coolidge.]

14 April 1924

UNIQUE COOLIDGE CLUB FORMED IN HIS NATIVE TOWN

[By this time, Coolidge was president, having succeeded to the position upon the death of Warren Harding; so, it did not take long for the political machinery to be set in motion for an elected term.]

5 November 1924

Herald headline proclaims: AGED WOMEN CAST BALLOTS FOR PRESIDENT . . . MANY NEARLY 90 YEARS OF AGE MAKE TRIP TO RUTLAND POLLING PLACES

White-haired women who have passed the four-score year's mark, some so feeble that they needed assistance to walk across the rooms in which the voting booths were placed and all manifestly proud to register their choice for president of the United States, were by no means an unusual sight at the polls in this city yesterday. For most of them it was their first vote.

[Since the 19th Amendment to the Constitution had been ratified in August of 1920, probably not many women had participated in that 1920 election.]

One of the oldest women to go to the polls was Mrs. Laura A. Marsh of Gibson Avenue, who will be 90 next February. Accompanied by her daughter, Mrs. Elva Aldrich . . . and her granddaughter, Mrs. William F. Kelleway . . . she made the trip by automobile to Ward 11 voting place and cast her ballot. It is stated that the three generations voted the straight Republican ticket.

1 March 1926

In a Letter to the Editor, Albert Congdon observed that the Reverend Samuel Williams laid the cornerstone of Vermont history by publishing in the 1795-96 *Rural Magazine* "copies of a large number of documents and old papers connected with the early history of our state, preserving thereby a large part of the real source matter used by historians in telling of those days."

11 January 1929

Mr. and Mrs. L.J. Egelston of Rutland acted as hosts for the Shriners at the Governor Charles M. Smith Inaugural Ball.

7 June 1930

THERE IS A NEED IN VERMONT OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING AND PARTICULARLY THERE IS A NEED OF ZONING.

[Vermont was the only state without zoning.]

Everywhere there is a tendency for the unscrupulous to destroy a residential district by erecting a factory, a gas tank, public garage . . . critics of zoning have claimed it to be unconstitutional. Gradually, however, courts have gone on record with liberal interpretations of zoning laws because they have come to realize that zoning, instead of destroying, creates and stabilizes property values. The U.S. Supreme Court, 22 November 1926 in the case of Euclid, Ohio, said the zoning principle is a logical development of the police power under modern conditions of community life.

11 June 1931

U.S. FOUND JOBS FOR 92,206 in 31 DAYS . . .

Sixty-four, registered in Vermont branch of U.S. Department of Labor Employment Bureau, were placed in March. . . . LOCAL MARBLE PLANT QUARRYING STONE FOR ADDITION TO U.S. SENATE BUILDING. Although the depression has greatly reduced activity in practically all lines of business, the Green Mountain Marble Company in Clarendon Springs is working its quarry to full capacity with 150 men employed for an order of 40,000 cubic feet of marble.

20 July 1931

The Herald headline reads: NATION PREPARES TO FACE HARD WINTER

[It was the third winter of massive unemployment but the news-clipper found some positive news. Providing work were several construction projects including the new U.S. Post Office on West Street, the laying of 17 miles of cement road from the city to the Leicester Town Line, a new dress factory to open on Cleveland Avenue by L. Kazon.]

In a flyer sent to Republican members, dated 6 November 1934, LJE, as county chairman, instructed them to vote straight down the line for every nominee of the party.

This is one of the most important elections since the Civil War . . . When the ballots are counted, the entire country will know that Vermont has spoken in no uncertain terms.

With the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as president and the arrival of the New Deal, the Republicans had plenty of opportunities for satirical comment. There are a number of typed poems in that vein in the scrapbooks, with no indication as to the author. Herewith, is part of one:

The 1934 Psalm

He maketh me to lie down on park benches;
He leadeth me beside still factories.
He disturbeth my soul. . . .

From 1938-42 dozens of ads appear in the scrapbooks promoting the advantages of attending the Rutland Business College. Especially notable were ads which pictured individual RBC graduates who told of passing Civil Service examinations and obtaining jobs in Washington. This was during World War II. Also, at this period there were dozens of small ads and news items about the spelling contests at the school. LJE felt "the interest of the students is always kept at high pitch." He got a large amount of free newspaper advertising weekly about the standing of the contestants. The RBC weekly spelling contests used 50 words from two different issues of *The Herald*, continuing until 1,000 new words have been given. LJE felt he was making definite progress in teaching a subject which had become a lost art in many of the high schools. He also felt that his method served a double purpose by acquainting students with current affairs while also improving their spelling. In an interview in a southern city, LJE was quoted as saying he was "... proud of the fact that the morning daily in his city was recently judged the best paper in the U.S. in any city under 50,000 population."

July 1939

Vermonters of the Week column featured LJE.

14 September 1939

STATE MUSIC LIBRARY TO BE HOUSED IN FEDERAL BUILDING

[It was supported by the Works Progress Administration and sponsored by the State. No one seems to know where the collection is now.]

20 December 1940

EARTHQUAKE SHAKES CITY AND VICINITY . . . PHONE CALLS CLOG WIRES ON AP

A project of interest to the Egelstons, among others, was the windmill turbine on Grandpa's Nob in Hubbardton. It was hailed as a way to harness wind to produce electricity. The unique feature of the project, in addition to its magnitude, was the fact that the turbine was expected to provide alternating current of constant frequency despite the fickleness of the wind. On 19 October 1941 the first power was fed into the Central Vermont Power System. It operated intermittently until 26 March 1945, when one huge blade snapped off its mounting and the other was damaged.

Another Vermonters of the Week column featured Katherine Dolan of Colony House, the brick building on State Street, south of Columbian Avenue. This house was an intermediate step between Brandon Training School and the outside world for those girls who could, with guidance, become self-supporting members of society. Generally, they were trained as domestic workers in private homes. Miss Dolan was the matron, dietician, cook, bookkeeper and wise counselor. She declared:

You can't stay in this work unless you like it. There is so much compensation, so much that can be done for the girls, and it takes so little to make them happy. Nothing is their fault, and they should have all the help possible. The job carries no glory with it and no fortune, but there are human values and I love it.

On 6 August 1943, a library, given by ex-Governor John E. Weeks, was dedicated in memory of his deceased wife Hattie, who had had an abiding interest in the girls at the Colony House in Rutland.

About the same time, the National Youth Administration had a program in Rutland for non-students. Forty-eight boys were employed for a total of 32,256 hours working on various projects, mostly repairs and improvements at the Poor Farm (now site of Vo-Tech Center), Kingsley, Dana, Lincoln and Park Street schools, the Rutland Free Clinic, city clerk and fire chief's offices and the municipal pool.

4 May 1944

**SALE OF FORMER OPERA HOUSE BUILDING RECALLS
MEMORIES OF OLD RUTLAND . . . BOUGHT BY J. S. MINTZER
AND W. I. GINSBERG.**

31 September 1944

**SEVERE EARTH SHOCK HITS RUTLAND AREA EARLY TODAY
. . . REPORTED ALL OVER THE EAST . . . HERALD PHONES
BEGIN RINGING WITHIN MOMENTS. . . .**

LJE found time to indulge in leisure activities, including being a champion checker player and speedboat racer. Evidence of his ability and creativity as a photographer is well documented in the historical society's collection. Family get-togethers in the summer in Shrewsbury and return visits to his boyhood home in New York State were part of the family life. He was a member of the Rutland Congregational Church where his wife was active in the women's groups.

It is easy to understand why LJE was always thin: activity was the mainspring of his life. At one time he presided over the Chamber of Commerce and over the years was a member of the Eastern Commercial Teachers Association. He rose to be president of the New England Business College Association. His ability for calligraphy, including the extravagantly ornate penmanship of an earlier period, was not lost on such organizations.

It is small wonder that the Congregational Church was thronged with people from all over the state for his funeral, following his death on 6 September 1943. In a letter to fellow ministers, explaining why he would be late for a special meeting, due to LJE's funeral, The Reverend J. Graydon Brown wrote:

LJE was a kindly man. I never heard him speak sharply or ungenerously of any man. He liked people and had a host of friends. We shall miss him. . . .

LJE's widow, Bertha Olive Egelston, was born in Shrewsbury on 19 June 1872. At the time of her death, 6 February 1962, she was living with her daughter, Vera V. Egelston. Vera was born 6 August 1891 in Plymouth, Vermont, and died 1 April 1987 in Rutland. A graduate of Rutland High School in 1910, she then attended her father's business school and taught there by 1913. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education from Syracuse University after completing summer school in 1932. She taught and was a guidance secretary at Rutland High School. Vera was like her father in many respects, tall and thin, capable in the world of business education, an avid Republican, DAR member and history buff.

Lewellyn J. Egelston, Jr., or "Tas," was born in Tyson, 28 May 1893. He attended Lyndon Institute, graduating in 1916. He remained in northern Vermont, marrying Gladys Hunter of Lyndonville, 20 December 1916. He was a rural mail carrier for 23 years and a 32nd degree Mason. He died very suddenly on 24 September 1943. There were no children. In fact, LJE had no grandchildren.

Mildred Olive Egelston, born 3 July 1895 in Rutland, was a graduate in 1912 of Rutland High School. She attended Smith College, graduating in 1917. She married Raymond R. Beane on 11 October 1924 but the marriage ended in divorce in May 1940. Among the scrapbook items is a Certificate in Appreciation of Effective Service issued to Mildred Egelston Beane from the U.S. Office of Scientific Research and Development, dated 1 March 1945. Later in August 1945 she wrote a letter to her mother which is of special interest.



Vera and Mildred and Tas, c. 1896



Vera and Mildred about 1898

At the time she was working at a Navy Field Station in Rhode Island. She said:

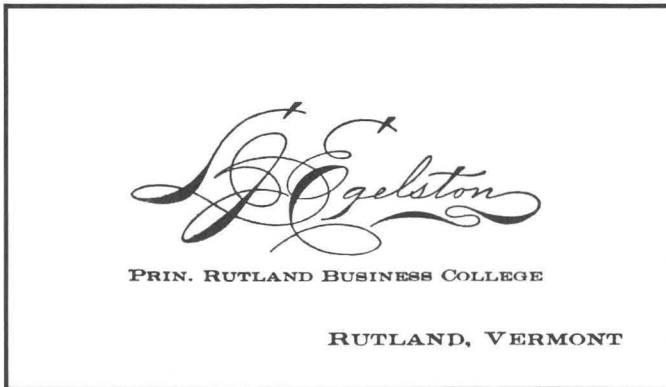
We are all hanging around radios today waiting for the good news from Japan . . . It just seems as if an awful load has been lifted from my shoulders because I had felt so helpless about the long hours I have had to put in. I will still have to work hard for awhile but we probably won't expand anymore. This field station in Rhode Island has been a terrific thing. . . . but there will not be so much hurry about the experiments we have been doing. It was all for the B-29s that were bombing Japan. Someday I can tell more about it. . . . I have known for months about the atomic bomb . . . At one time it was being worked on in one of our buildings but it got too hot to keep it there.

One can only surmise the Egelstons' reasons for compiling scrapbooks: perhaps a sense of history, a desire to leave one's mark in society, a need to have some record of happenings that affected one's life, the feeling that an individual can and should make a difference. As teachers, LJE and Vera unquestionably made a difference in many hundreds of lives.

AUTHOR

Wife of Frederic P. Elwert, mother of six children, native of New York City and environs. Served the historical society as exhibit chairman, museum chairman; president 1984-87. Wrote the article on Ella Bean Livingston in the Fall issue of the *Quarterly*, Vol. XI No. 4, 1981.

There are some practical matters relating to scrapbook-making that can make it easier for future historians to utilize the material. Dating the items is important; identification of persons and places is vital, and the pasting of clippings on good quality paper inside a sturdy cover prevents the deterioration that comes with years of storage.





LJE was a member of the Masons, evidently from his earliest days in Vermont. In September 1920, he was elevated to the 33rd degree. During the '20s, '30s and '40s, he attended numerous Masonic meetings in the eastern part of the country.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of appropriate dues. (See dues schedule below.) With membership, for its period, go a subscription to the Quarterly, any newsletters, a copy of the Annual Report, entitlement to vote at business meetings, and benefits accruing from support of the Society's Museums, exhibits, programs, collections and library. The year through which membership is paid and the category are noted on all address labels.

Please send any address change on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard freely available at your local post office).

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